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Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Security Council calls on Georgian and Abkhaz parties to make substantial progress towards political settlement; says Abkhaz obstruction of return of refugees is totally unacceptable.

* Security Council expresses concern over reports of possible attack into southern Bosnia; calls on parties to exercise restraint.

* Secretary-General says he is firmly committed to deterring attacks on safe area of Gorazde; cites deployment of military observers and threat of NATO air strikes.

* Secretary-General congratulates Tajik Government and Opposition on signing Protocol on principles for peace and extending cease-fire agreement for six months.

* Security Council to meet tomorrow to address problems with Bosnian and Croatian Governments regarding deployment of Rapid Reaction Force.

* Special Representative for Angola expresses concern about continuing violations of cease-fire, including laying of land-mines.

* Ad Hoc Committee on International Criminal Court discusses definitions of genocide, aggression, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

* Assembly of International Seabed Authority decides Kingston Office will continue as interim secretariat; bars Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from its first session.

* FAO to open Subregional Office for Southern and East Africa in Harare.

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For information media—not an official record

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The Security Council today renewed its call to the Georgian and Abkhaz parties -- particularly to the Abkhaz side -- to reach substantial progress in their political negotiations. In a statement by its President, Nugroho Wisnumurti (Indonesia), the Council noted that there had been little overall progress towards a comprehensive settlement and that a stalemate existed with respect to the return of refugees and displaced persons.

The Council expressed deep concern at the continued obstruction of the return of the refugees and displaced persons by the Abkhaz authorities, which was totally unacceptable. Reaffirming resolution 993 (1995), it once more called on the Abkhaz authorities to accelerate the return process significantly, to guarantee the safety of all returnees and to regularize the status of spontaneous returnees.

The Council expressed full support for the efforts of the Secretary-General, and of the Russian Federation in its capacity as facilitator, aimed at achieving a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict. It noted with appreciation the Secretary-General's appointment of a resident Deputy to his Special Envoy. It also supported his efforts regarding the establishment of a human rights monitoring mission in the area, and encouraged him to continue consultations with the parties to that end.

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The President of the Security Council today expressed concern over reports of a possible attack into southern Bosnia and Herzegovina. In a statement to correspondents at Headquarters, Mr. Wisnumurti called on all parties to exercise the utmost restraint.

In another development, the Council President met today with the Permanent Representative of Croatia, Mario Nobilo, regarding alleged artillery attacks by Croatian forces against the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) on 12 August. According to the President, Mr. Nobilo said that Croatia had no intention of provoking the Federal Republic, and that the alleged attacks should be seen in the context of Bosnian Serb shelling of Dubrovnik.

Mr. Noblio stressed that if shells had fallen on the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), it was a totally unintentional occurrence. He underlined the need for an end to the shelling of Dubrovnik, stressing the historic city's importance to the Croatian economy.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today voiced concern at reports suggesting that the United Nations was abandoning the safe area of Gorazde, from which the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) infantry presence was about to be withdrawn. He stressed that the Organization remained fully committed to its mandate to deter attacks on Gorazde and other safe areas. That deterrence was achieved through a combination of the military presence on the ground and the threat of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) air strikes.

The British Government had announced that it would withdraw its troops from Gorazde at the end of August, the Secretary-General continued. As attempts to replace them had been unsuccessful, the United Nations had no choice but to deploy military observers in Gorazde, backed up by NATO air power. The Force Commander had thus been instructed to draw up plans for a revised military deployment to serve as the eyes and ears of the international community, working in close cooperation with NATO. A continuing United Nations presence in Gorazde was therefore assured. The Secretary-General reiterated his commitment to deterring attacks on the safe area and on the 60,000 civilians who lived there.

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The Secretary-General today expressed great pleasure on learning that President Rakhmonov of Tajikistan and the leader of the Tajik Opposition, Abdullo Nuri, had signed a Protocol on the main principles establishing peace in Tajikistan. They also agreed to extend the current cease-fire for six months from 26 August.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali congratulated the parties on their achievement, which showed their will to address fundamental political and institutional issues at the next round of inter-Tajik talks, set to begin on 18 September. He thanked the observer countries, particularly Afghanistan, Iran and Russia, for their support, and expressed his appreciation for the efforts of Special Envoy Ramiro Piriz-Ballon.

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The Security Council will meet tomorrow to address problems being experienced with the Bosnian and Croatian Governments regarding the deployment of the Rapid Reaction Force. The Secretary-General today wrote to the Council bringing the matter to its attention, according to a United Nations spokesman. He said that some major elements of the Force had been prevented from deploying, and that they were thus unable to carry out the task of assisting the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR).

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The Secretary-General reiterated the Organization's position that the Rapid Reaction Force was covered by the existing status of force agreements with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. He did not accept the position that those agreements had to be amended, or new ones negotiated, for the Force. He asked the Council to take up the matter in order to avoid any further delays in the deployment.

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While violations of the Angolan cease-fire have been decreasing in number, they have been increasing in severity, Special Representative Alioune Blondin Beye said yesterday. He expressed concern at the continuation of fighting in Angola and at the fact that new-land mines were being laid in total violation of the peace accords.

Mr. Beye indicated that both the Angolan Government and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) had committed violations of the accords. He urged the parties to give the matter serious attention.

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The Ad Hoc Committee on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court has been considering approaches to the legal definition of genocide, aggression, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Speakers yesterday generally agreed that the definition of genocide in the Genocide Convention of 1948 should not be widened in the draft statute for an international criminal court. Several said that systematic attacks on social and political groups could be covered under crimes against humanity, precluding the need to expand the definition of genocide.

Speakers differed as to whether the code of crimes for the proposed court should include acts of aggression. The representative of Germany stated that heads of State or government must be held individually responsible for acts of aggression. Otherwise, a political leader could carry out an act of aggression without committing acts of genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity, and avoid prosecution after the fact.

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The Assembly of the International Seabed Authority has decided that the Kingston Office for the Law of the Sea will continue as the Authority's interim secretariat. In another action taken without a vote, the Assembly decided that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) should not participate in the work of its first session. It also decided to hold intersessional consultations in New York from 6 to 8 December on the composition of the Authority's Council.

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The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has signed an agreement with the Government of Zimbabwe to open an FAO Subregional Office for Southern and East Africa in Harare. The new Office will direct FAO activities from the Horn of Africa to South Africa, a region in which some 19 million people face food shortages as a result of drought and civil conflict.

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